

**United States Department of State  
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs  
Office of International Visitors**

**A GUIDE FOR INTERNATIONAL VISITORS**

This guide has been designed to help participants in the United States Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program understand how their program is developed and what to expect before, during, and after their program.

**WELCOME**

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State welcomes you as a participant in the International Visitor Leadership Program. Through your participation, we hope you will come to understand the people and culture of the United States by way of the personal and professional experiences you will have in America.

During your visit, you will observe many different aspects of American social, economic, political, cultural and educational institutions and practices. You will also have some time to visit historic sites and scenic areas and to attend cultural events that will help you get the flavor of our varied and vibrant culture. America is a diverse nation - culturally, ethnically, and geographically - and while it will not be possible for you to experience it all during a short trip, every effort will be made to give you an idea of the diversity that makes up the face of America.

Wherever you go in your trip, you will find people eager to meet with you and willing to welcome you into their homes to exchange ideas, experiences, and opinions. As you learn about America through them, they will also learn from you about your country and its history, culture, and aspirations. It is our hope that you will establish lasting professional and personal ties with the Americans you meet while you are here.

**BACKGROUND**

The International Visitor Leadership Program (formerly managed by the United States Information Agency) is coordinated and administered by the Office of International Visitors in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State. It is run with the cooperation of a number of private, non-profit organizations (called National Program Agencies) that receive grants from the U.S. Department of State and with the assistance of volunteer community organizations (Councils for International Visitors) from across the United States.

Each year more than 4,400 visitors from around the world participate in the program. Some come for individual programs and others come as part of single-country, regional, or multi-regional program.

The International Visitor Leadership Program was designed to increase mutual understanding through communication at the personal and professional level. Participants in the program are established or potential foreign leaders in government, politics, media, education, economics, drug and crime prevention, science, environment, labor, human rights, women's issues, arts management, and a variety of other fields. These participants are selected by American embassies overseas to visit the United States where they will meet and confer with their professional counterparts. During their programs, which usually last two to four weeks, International Visitors have an opportunity to experience the United States firsthand.

During the 60 years of the program, hundreds of former participants have risen to important positions in their own countries. Among the alumni of the program there are over 200 current and former Chiefs-of-State or Heads of Government, and more than 1500 alumni are cabinet level ministers. Many other former International Visitors are changing the face of their own country and of the world as journalists, government officials, educators, judges, economists, environmentalists, and activists.

## **SOME FAQ'S (FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS) ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL VISITOR LEADERSHIP PROGRAM**

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### ***How was I chosen to participate in this program?***

Most International Visitors are chosen because they have worked with or come to know someone at an American Embassy or an American Consulate overseas. This person may be in the Public Affairs or Cultural Section of the Embassy (which is the section that manages the program overseas at U.S. Embassies) or it may be someone from the political or economic section, from the Defense Attaché's office, or from a development organization such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID.) People are chosen for the program because they, their country, and the United States will benefit from the exchange of ideas that occurs during these person-to-person exchange programs. Participants are chosen in areas that the Embassy has deemed of bilateral interest to the host country and the U.S.

### ***Is this an official visit?***

As a participant in the International Visitor Leadership Program, you will be in the United States as a private citizen and will not be involved in the protocol or ceremony, which would accompany an official or state visit.

### ***Who pays for my trip?***

About two thirds of the 4,400 visitors that come to the U.S. under the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) each year are fully funded by the U.S. Government. These fully funded IV participants are generally in programs that run for about three weeks. The remaining one third of the visitors who come under the Voluntary Visitor Program receive either no funding or partial funding for per diem and domestic travel within the U.S. Voluntary Visitor Programs usually last about a week to ten days.

### ***What does this funding include?***

Before you begin your trip, you should clearly understand the terms of your invitation--the length of your stay and other provisions. Any questions you have, should be discussed with the Public Affairs or Cultural Office at the Embassy or Consulate.

Your invitation may include one or more of the following benefits, either wholly or in part:

1. With the exception of Voluntary Visitors, International Visitors receive round-trip economy jet air transportation by the most direct American air carrier route available from your home to Washington, DC, and return. If you receive an excursion ticket and wish to make changes in routing for personal reasons, you must ask before leaving home whether your ticket has any travel restrictions.
2. Transportation by air, bus, train, and/or rental car while you are in the United States.
3. A daily allowance--called a "per diem" allowance--for meals, hotel rooms, taxi, bus and/or subway fares within a city, telephone calls, laundry and dry cleaning, tips and similar necessary living expenses during the term of your visit. This allowance should be adequate over the length of your stay to cover the costs of moderate daily living.
4. International Visitors (but not Voluntary Visitors) receive a very basic health and accident insurance policy, provided by the U.S. Department of State, during their stay in the United States. If you are covered by insurance, you will be given a brochure on the policy when you arrive in the United States. Please be aware that this policy does NOT cover any pre-existing conditions. Because of this and since the policy coverage is minimal; you are strongly encouraged to purchase additional insurance to ensure full coverage.

5. A small allowance for tickets to cultural events and for the purchase and mailing of books and professional and educational materials. (Please note that sometimes this allowance is not given to visitors directly but rather to the program agency who will then book tickets to cultural events for the visitor.)

### ***Will I be traveling alone?***

Visitors may be invited to participate in a wide range of different kinds of programs. These include:

- *Individual Programs* -- these programs are designed for one visitor who travels alone or in the company of an Interpreter or an English Language Officer, provided by the U.S. Department of State;
- *Individuals Traveling Together* (ITT) -- these programs consist of two to five individuals from the same country who have the same general interest, i.e. environmental education, reinventing government, university curriculum development, etc.;
- *Single Country Programs* (SCP) -- these programs consist of a small group from one country examining a single theme;
- *Regional Programs* (RP) -- these programs involve participants from a single geographic area but a number of countries, such as Latin America or Sub-Saharan Africa or South Asia, examining a single theme - they are conducted in a common language for the region or in English;
- *Multi-Regional Programs* (MRP) -- these programs involve approximately twenty participants from around the world who are all interested in one thematic area such as women's rights or economic and trade development in the U.S. These programs are always conducted in English.

### ***Who plans my program?***

International Visitor Leadership Programs are collaborative efforts that involve many individuals and organizations in the United States and in the visitors' country.

These include:

- the International Visitor Leadership Program participant;
- the Public Affairs Officer, Cultural Affairs Officer or the Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer and the Cultural Affairs Specialist at the American Embassy or consulate overseas;
- the program officer in the Office of International Visitors, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of State in Washington, D.C.;
- the program officer at a National Program Agency, which has been contracted by the U.S. Department of State to organize your program (these agencies are usually but not necessarily located in Washington, D.C.);
- the volunteer(s) or paid staff at the Councils for International Visitors in cities across America; (most of these Councils are city based but a few may be attached to universities);
- and the English Language Officer(s) (ELO) or Interpreter(s) who accompany you or your group.

Your program officers in Washington, D.C. from the U.S. Department of State and from the National Program Agency, using information from the Embassy or Consulate, will begin the general planning of your trip but the Councils for International Visitors handle the specific appointments and plans for outside of Washington, D.C. The almost 100 non-profit, community based organizations located across the U.S. are the real experts on the professional programs and cultural activities in their cities or regions. They are the ones who make the professional appointments, set up the arrangements for visitors to attend cultural events and plan home hospitality.

### ***How is my program planned?***

#### **Participants in Multi-Regional, Regional and Single Country Programs**

If you are a member of a Multi-Regional, Regional or Single Country program, your itinerary will be arranged before you arrive in the U.S. The U.S. Department of State and National Program Agency officers plan these programs. The cities chosen are those, which are especially strong in the thematic area of the program. In some larger group programs, the group may split with two or three parts of the group going to different cities once or twice during the course of the full program. The groups always begin and end together. This advance planning with fixed itinerary is necessary for group programs

because arrangements for appointments, hotels and travel reservation for large groups must be made well in advance of the trip. While it is important for participants in group programs to stay together for all of the business meetings, which have been planned in advance, every effort is made to allow some free time in these programs for individuals to set up their own professional appointments or follow their own interests for sightseeing during non-work hours.

### **Individual International Visitors**

For visitors traveling as individuals, programs may be more fluid and with some advance commitments made outside Washington, D.C. (almost all individual programs begin in Washington, D.C.) but with some room for a final formal itinerary to be developed at your initial first day meeting with the U.S. Department of State and National Program officers. The planners of your program will have clear ideas of cities or institutions that they feel you should visit as part of your program but the details may be worked out with you at this meeting.

### **Voluntary Visitor Programs**

Voluntary Visitors travel to the U.S. as individuals, single country groups and, rarely, regional or multi-regional groups. Their visits may be solely for the purpose of participating in the Voluntary Visitor Program or undertaken in addition to attendance at a conference, a training program, or some other activity. As with Multi-Regional, Regional, Single Country and Individual International Visitor programs, Voluntary Visitors will have the opportunity to meet and to confer with their professional counterparts both in Washington, D.C. and throughout the United States, and to obtain a broader exposure to U.S. cultural, social and political life. Because of their shorter duration (usually seven to ten days), all Voluntary Visitor Programs, like Multi-Regional & Regional Programs, are pre-planned with little latitude for adjustments once the visitors have arrived in the U.S. For this reason, it is particularly important for Voluntary Visitors too maintain close contact with the U.S. Embassy or Consulate during the program planning process and to have a clear idea of what they would like to accomplish and the subjects they would like to address during the visit. Voluntary Visitor Programs are arranged either directly by U.S. Department of State Program Officers or in conjunction with National Program Agencies, in both instances in close cooperation with the Councils for International Visitors throughout the United States.

## **YOUR INTERNATIONAL VISITOR LEADERSHIP PROGRAM TRIP**

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### **BEFORE YOUR PROGRAM BEGINS**

#### **Planning Your Trip**

Program planning begins when the invited International Visitor meets with his or her contacts at the American Embassy or Consulate. This is the prospective visitor's first chance to discuss in general what they hope to get out of their program and in specific to request appointments. These requests for appointments may be general ones (i.e. "I would like to meet someone in the U.S. dealing with ways to handle low cost soil conservation." or "I would like to see a business company's program to help its employees with drug or alcohol addiction problems.") or may be specific (i.e. "I would like to meet with Professor X who visited my University last year and said he/she would welcome visits by individuals from my institution to further discuss the global economy." or "I would like to meet with journalist X from the Morning Times because I read an article by him/her which raised an important issue for my country's policy on fishing rights.")

Before you begin your program in the United States, it is important to decide on the professional objectives for your trip and try to determine the priorities for those objectives. For example, if you are coming to the United States to look at ways government and community organizations are attempting to prevent drug use, you may want to look at a variety of programs. However, if you are particularly interested in drug prevention programs being run in schools that would be your number one priority. These objectives and the way you choose to set them in priority order should be discussed with your contacts at the Embassy or Consulate so that they can pass on the information to those in the U.S. who are planning your trip. If there is an American Library or Information Resource Center run by the Embassy or Consulate near you, you may wish to ask the help of the librarians in researching resources in your areas of thematic interest.

It is important to discuss your most important objectives with your Embassy contacts since the time and amount of money available for travel within the United States are, of necessity, limited. In a one-month visit, for instance, five days are usually spent in Washington, DC. Leaving out the weekends, seventeen days are then left for professional contacts and appointments outside Washington, D.C., and for travel between the cities you will visit. Occasionally, professional appointments can be made on weekends. However weekends are usually used to provide time for sightseeing, attending cultural events, or visiting the homes of American families to experience everyday American life.

Please keep in mind that requests for very high-level appointments are often difficult to fulfill and that some institutions (such as CNN or the FBI) receive so many requests for visits each year that they may only be able to offer regularly scheduled tours.

The meeting with Embassy or Consulate officials is also a time for you to discuss any personal interests you have which you would like to pursue during your off hours (i.e. you have always loved jazz and longed to visit New Orleans; or you raise bonsai and want to encounter fellow enthusiasts; or you want to see a basketball game; or visit a museum devoted to impressionist paintings) -- your meeting with your Embassy or Consulate contacts is the time to make these interests known.

The Embassy or Consulate sends your requests to Washington, D.C., along with your biographic information. This is what is used to begin planning your program. If something occurs to you after you have had your meeting(s) with your Embassy contacts, you should discuss your requests and ideas with the Embassy so that they can forward your ideas to Washington, D.C. in advance of the program opening.

While Multi-Regional and Regional program itineraries are prepared in advance, there are still often opportunities during the course of these programs to have individual appointments or visit a particular museum or landmark, if these are in a city that is part of the general itinerary.

While planning your trip, you should also keep in mind distance, seasonal events, and holidays.

### **Distance**

It is 3,000 miles (about 4,800 km) and three time zones from the East Coast to the West Coast across the continental United States. It is nearly 2,000 miles (about 3,200 km) from the United States' northern border with Canada to its southern border with Mexico. Travel between cities can be very time-consuming. While you are in the United States, most of your travel will be by air in order to save time although occasionally you may use train or bus transportation for scenic views or short trips.

### **Seasonal Considerations**

The regular season in the United States for theater, ballet, opera and symphony orchestras is from late September through May, although in some cities the season may extend year round. And in most cities there are many cultural events during the summer, including music festivals, outdoor concerts, summer theaters and agricultural fairs. National, state and municipal parks offer scenic attractions and extensive recreational facilities throughout the country. Some parks are open all year; others are closed in winter.

Visitors with special interest in education should be aware that many schools and universities are not in full session during the summer.

Summer vacations are not a rigid custom in the United States. Nevertheless, many people do vacation in the summer and it may be difficult to arrange some appointments from July to early September.

The months of May, July, August and September are busy periods for International Visitor travel in the United States. If you travel during other months, you will find facilities less crowded, and the Americans you meet will have more time to spend with you.

**Holidays**

Major holidays in the United States include:

New Year's Day (January 1)  
Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday (Third Monday in January)  
President's Day (Third Monday in February)  
Easter (March or April)  
Memorial Day (Last Monday in May)  
Independence Day (July 4)  
Labor Day (First Monday in September)  
Columbus Day (Second Monday in October)  
Veterans' Day (November 11)  
Thanksgiving Day (Fourth Thursday in November)  
Christmas Day (December 25)

Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's are usually extended into long weekends or holidays. It is difficult to obtain professional appointments during these holiday periods. Although the United States does not observe a large number of holidays, you will want to take into account those holidays listed here when you make your travel plans.

**What to Pack**

It is extremely important - whether you are on an individual program or in a group program - to pack light. Not all airports and train stations in the U.S. have porters readily available and the services of porters may be quite expensive. This means that many times during your trip you may need to carry your own suitcases. Suitcases of manageable size (preferably with wheels) along with a carry-on suitcase of a size allowed in the cabin of an aircraft are strongly recommended. Soft-sided canvas or nylon briefcases rather than heavy hard attaché cases are usually easier to manage, as most visitors carry their briefcase throughout the days when they have professional appointments.

At the same time you are trying to pack only the minimum of clothing that you will need, it is important to remember that your trip may have you in a number of quite different weather conditions. If you come in the winter, you may go from snow in the northeast to warm temperatures in Florida or Texas. If you come in the summer, your trip may take you from the heat and humidity of a mid-Atlantic state to the cool weather of the Colorado Mountains.

If you are participating in a Multi-Regional or Regional program with an itinerary that is set before you arrive in the U.S., you will be able to ask your contact at the Embassy about what the weather might be in the cities you are scheduled to visit. Guidebooks to the U.S. can give you an idea of the average seasonal temperatures for different regions in America, but in general, from November to early April, cold weather prevails in most regions of the United States except the extreme South and Southwest. During that time, a heavy coat and rainwear are necessities. You may also need boots for snow and will want to have gloves and a hat packed. In many parts of the country, weather in spring (April to mid-June) and in autumn (September-October) is moderate. A light coat or jacket is necessary. Summer is hot in most areas and lightweight clothing, preferably wash-and-wear or easy maintenance, is recommended.

Business wear in the U.S. is more formal in some areas of the country than in others but visitors should assume that at all of their professional meetings, they will wear either western business clothes or their own national dress. However, visitors should also bring some casual non-professional wear for weekends. It is very important for the visitor to bring comfortable shoes, as many visitors end up walking a great deal during their visit, especially during weekend sightseeing expeditions. Formal wear is generally not required.

**Business Cards**

Visitors often tell us that they wish that they had brought more business (calling) cards with them on their trip. Keep in mind that it is not unusual to meet 10 to 25 people per day at various official and unofficial settings. Because of the travel schedule, it will be very difficult to get more cards printed during your visit, so please bring more than you think you will need. If you have access to e-mail at work or at home, it is useful to put your e-mail address on your cards so that people you meet during the course of your trip can continue to stay in touch with you.

#### Dietary Restrictions and Health Considerations

If there are foods that you do not eat because of health or religious reasons, please be sure to let your Embassy or Consulate contacts know ahead of time so that they can advise Washington, D.C. Every effort will be made to allow you to follow those dietary restrictions.

Should you have any health considerations that need to be taken into consideration in planning your trip, be sure that the Embassy is aware of them before you leave. If you take medications for conditions such as asthma or allergies, be sure to make this clear before leaving. It is important that you carry with you any prescription medication that you take regularly or might need to take during the course of your trip. While it is possible to buy headache and cold remedies in American pharmacies, most medicines require a prescription in the U.S. and it is best, if you arrive prepared with what you will need.

#### Spouses and Family

The professional nature of the International Visitor Leadership Program does not lend itself to travel by accompanying spouses or other dependents. Dependents may not accompany International Visitor Leadership Program participants.

If your spouse or dependents wish to visit the United States, we suggest that they join you at the conclusion of your participation in the International Visitor Leadership Program. To a limited extent, the International Visitor Leadership Program can help you change your return ticket in order to add in days at the end of the program for personal travel with your family. Please be sure to discuss your plans with your contact at the Embassy.

#### Emergencies

In the case of a family emergency occurring at home during the time you are on the program, your family should contact your Embassy contact(s) and they will assist your family in getting in touch with you. Regional & Multi-Regional Program participants usually have contact numbers in the U.S. before leaving their country but if your family has any difficulty getting in touch with you directly, they should feel free to contact the Embassy for help. Family members who need to reach you urgently, outside of business hours, can call the Embassy or Consulate closest to your home. Embassies and Consulates have telephone operators on duty 24 hours and these operators will be able to contact the U.S. Department of State Operations Center in Washington, D.C. to help your family members get in touch with you in case of an emergency.

#### Money

The money provided in your per diem allowance should be sufficient for your hotels, meals, transportation, and incidental expenses, such as laundry or postage. However, some visitors like to bring some additional money to cover the cost of professional materials or books that they wish to purchase in the U.S. or for souvenirs or presents for their families or friends. It is very important that while they are on the trip that they carry this money in the form of traveler's checks or that they use a credit card. Visitors should never carry any large amount of cash with them. If this cash is lost or stolen there is no provision for replacement by the U.S. government. Traveler's checks can be replaced. **If you bring cash, please be sure to ask your Interpreter or English Language Officer to help you find a bank to convert this cash to traveler's checks on the first day of your program.**

#### DURING YOUR VISIT

## **Your Arrival**

The Office of International Visitors will have program participants met at the following International Airports: Dulles (Washington, D.C.), John F. Kennedy (New York, NY), Miami (Miami, FL) and Hartsfield (Atlanta, GA). It is therefore very important for the office in Washington, D.C. to have prior knowledge of your flight information. Should this change due to a delayed or missed flight, it is important to contact the Embassy or Consulate closest to your home and ask that they notify Washington, D.C. of your change in arrival.

Usually no appointments are made for the day of your arrival in the country, since air travel over long distances can be exhausting. Upon arriving in Washington, D.C., it is important to try to get a good rest before beginning your program. Visitors, who arrive over the weekend, can discuss with their Interpreter or English Language Officer possibilities for sightseeing or museum visits before the program begins.

## **Interpreters and English Language Officers**

If you do not speak fluent English, an Interpreter will meet you at your initial point of arrival or in Washington, D.C., and will travel with you throughout your stay in the United States. The major duty of this person is to interpret so that you and those you meet may communicate with each other. Some visitors with some English will use an interpreter for the major portion of a professional meeting but then try out their English during a question period or in informal situations.

Individual visitors and small groups will usually have a consecutive interpreter traveling with them (i.e. the Interpreter waits until a sentence or paragraph has been spoken and then interprets in either language.) Larger groups will have two simultaneous interpreters and microphone/headphone equipment with them for all meetings. Please remember that these professional interpreters are not translators. In other words, the interpreters will work with the spoken word only. They may be able to help with informal translations of menus or sightseeing booklets but will not be able to translate documents you receive during the course of your trip. If you have materials about your own organization or institution, which you wish to share at your American meetings, be sure to have them translated before you arrive.

Visitors who speak English well usually travel alone. However, under certain circumstances and by program officer's special request, an English Language Officer (ELO) may be provided for individuals who speak English but who may not be familiar with customs in the United States. All multi-regional programs have English Language Officers traveling with them to assist in the logistics and administrative details of the trip.

Interpreters and English Language Officers are experienced persons from many fields and professions. Interpreters and ELOs are not business secretaries, nor are they responsible for carrying your baggage. A good professional working relationship based on mutual helpfulness and respect should be established at the beginning of your travel together. In addition, the Interpreter or ELO can be helpful in providing context for your professional meetings or in explaining American customs, holidays, traditions and life styles. The Interpreter or ELO may or may not spend his/her free time with you, according to both your plans and wishes.

## **Day One**

On the first day of your program, you will be given a check to cover all of the per diem expenses of your program and you will have time to convert this check to traveler's checks. You will be responsible for budgeting the entire amount of the per diem allowance to cover all of the hotels and meal and transportation expenses of your trip.

On your first day, if you are covered by the health and accident insurance, you will also receive information on the health and accident insurance provided by the U.S. Department of State during the time you are a participant in the International Visitor Leadership Program.



At this first day program opening, individual participants have an opportunity to discuss and plan their trip after the Washington, D.C. segment. Multi-Regional and Regional programs begin with a briefing on the first day to discuss the entire trip itinerary.

On day one, you will have an opportunity to meet the U.S. Department of State Program Officer who has been responsible for your trip. This Program Officer works for the Office of International Visitors in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State. The programming responsibilities are divided into three divisions: Voluntary Visitors, Multi-Regional Programs and the Regional Programs. Regional Programs are further divided into geographic areas of the world to coordinate all International Visitors who are not in Multi-Regional Programs or Voluntary Visitors.

The Office of International Visitors is located on the second floor of the State Annex Building #44 at 301 4th Street S.W., Washington, D.C. 20547. The phone numbers for individual offices are below.

*Voluntary Visitors Division*

202-453-8562  
800-827-2987

Africa/Europe  
202-453-8562  
800-827-2987

Western Hemisphere Affairs, East Asia, North Africa, Near East & South Asia  
202-453-8562  
800-827-2987

*Multi-Regional Programs Division*

202-453-8574  
800-650-9822

*Regional Programs Division*

Africa  
202-453-8576  
800-827-3824

Europe & NIS  
202-203-5138  
866-325-6178

Western Hemisphere  
202-453-8596  
800-827-3824

East Asia  
202-453-8586  
800-827-3824

North Africa, Near East, South Asia  
202-453-8606  
800-827-3824

You may wish to note the name and contact number(s) for your U.S. Department of State Program Officer here:

Name:  
Phone:  
Fax:  
E-Mail:

### **National Program Agencies**

At your introductory briefing and planning session, you will also meet the Program Officer from the national program agency who has planned out the itinerary. While the U.S. Department of State has overall responsibility for your itinerary and program, it usually works with a private non-profit organization (called a national program agency) to assist with all of the arrangements. Program agencies have a long experience with arranging the programs for all types of International Visitors. One of the following program agencies is most likely to be the one responsible for your schedule:

*American Center for International Labor Solidarity*  
1925 K Street, NW - Suite 300  
Washington, D.C. 20006-1105  
202-778-4500

*Academy for Educational Development*  
1875 Connecticut Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20009  
202-884-8000  
800-634-8956  
Fax - 202-884-8477  
website: [www.AED.org](http://www.AED.org)

*World Learning - Delphi International Program*  
1015 Eighteenth Street NW - Suite 1000  
Washington, D.C. 20036  
202-898-0950  
800-826-0196  
Fax - 202-842-0885  
website: [www.worldlearning.org/delphi](http://www.worldlearning.org/delphi)

*Institute of International Education (IIE)*  
1400 K Street NW - Suite 650  
Washington, D.C. 20005  
202-326-7695  
800-424-8030  
Fax - 202-326-7696  
website: [www.iie.org](http://www.iie.org)

*Meridian International Center*  
1624 Crescent Place, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20009  
202-667-6670  
800-424-2974  
Fax - 202-319-1306  
website: [www.meridian.org](http://www.meridian.org)

*Mississippi Consortium for International Development (MCID)*  
1636 Connecticut Avenue, NW - Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20009

202-667-6243  
800-413-9845  
Fax - 202-667-6240  
website: [www.mcidwashington.org](http://www.mcidwashington.org)

*Phelps Stokes Fund*  
1420 K Street, NW - Suite 800  
Washington, D.C. 20005  
202-371-9544  
800-874-7797  
Fax – 202-371-9522  
website: [www.psfdc.org](http://www.psfdc.org)

*The Graduate School, USDA*  
600 Maryland Avenue, SW – Suite 320  
Washington, DC 20024  
202-314-3500  
800-331-4229  
Fax – 202-479-6803  
website: [www.grad.usda.gov](http://www.grad.usda.gov)

You may wish to note the name and phone number(s) for your National Program Agency Officer here:

Name:  
Phone:  
Fax:  
E-Mail:

## **Outside of Washington, D.C.**

### **Local Sponsors**

In order to arrange your itinerary, your program officer is in contact with local sponsors in the various cities you will visit to plan your program, to provide them with your biographic information, and to let them know your arrival time in that city. These local sponsors (and there are more than 90 across America) are known as Councils for International Visitors (CIV). These Councils are non-profit organizations, usually city-based but occasionally attached to a University. Your local sponsor is responsible for arranging your program in their city and surrounding area. This includes your professional appointments, sightseeing, and home hospitality. In New York City, the U.S. Department of State's New York Program Branch makes the professional appointments for the visitors.

Before you leave Washington, DC, you will receive a copy of your itinerary, which will include the names of local sponsors in the locations you will visit and the names of the hotels where you will stay. If necessary, adjustments can be made in the itinerary after you leave Washington, D.C., but your program officer **MUST** be consulted regarding any proposed change, since a change of schedule at one point may affect the entire schedule beyond that point.

Once you leave Washington, D.C. your program officer and program assistant will keep in touch with you throughout your trip and will forward mail and any important messages. While you are in the United States, your mail should be addressed to you in care of the program agency.

The CIV organizations are community-based, locally organized and usually locally financed. Some of these organizations have paid professional staff, but most operate largely with volunteers. You will find that the largest part of your time in these cities around the country will be spent with people who are providing assistance on a purely volunteer basis, without pay. These volunteers help foreign travelers like

students and tourists, as well as International Visitors who come at the invitation of the U.S. government. The people who serve in these local community organizations represent a variety of occupations and activities: chambers of commerce, business corporations, labor unions, Rotary, Kiwanis and other service clubs, women's organizations, schools and city governments. The volunteers contribute their time and expertise to help make your visit as informative and as useful as possible. We believe that this network of volunteers involved in the International Visitor Leadership Program is an example of public-private, government-citizen partnership at its best.

The local organizations cannot always meet visitors at the airport upon arrival, so unless instructed otherwise you should take bus or limousine transportation from the airport to your designated hotel. Normally, there will be a letter from your local sponsor at your hotel describing arrangements made for your visit and indicating when you will meet your sponsor to discuss any still-to-be-scheduled part of the local program. If there is no letter waiting for you, telephone your local sponsor whose name, address and telephone number are listed on the itinerary prepared by your program agency, which you received at the opening session of your program.

### **Professional Meetings**

The style of professional meetings in the United States may differ greatly from the style of such meetings in your own country. It is not uncommon for business meetings to begin the professional discussion immediately with no time devoted to general conversation beforehand. It is often assumed in the United States that everyone present at a business meeting is very busy and therefore one should "get down to business" immediately. Business meetings over lunch may be held in a restaurant or may be sandwiches and soft drinks in a bag eaten in the company or government office conference room.

You may not have the full schedule for the entire trip ahead of time unless you are on a Multi-Regional or Regional program. But you should have the schedule for each city as soon as you arrive. It is important that you familiarize yourself with each day's schedule before setting off for your appointments. You will need to be prepared for meetings by knowing what they're about and something about the organization you are visiting. You will also want to think over what topics you would like to have discussed. Some of the people you meet may expect you to take the lead and talk about what areas you want to discuss. Many meetings will have a good deal of give-and-take and even the most formal presentations usually leave time for questions and discussion.

### **Punctuality**

In the United States it is the custom to arrive at an appointment at the exact time arranged. The people you are scheduled to see have voluntarily agreed to assist the local sponsor in making your visit successful and enjoyable. They are very often business and professional people with other responsibilities whose time is fully scheduled each day.

While most of them will be gracious to a visitor who arrives late for an appointment, a late arrival usually means that the appointment is shorter and more hurried than would otherwise be the case. If you know you will be more than five minutes late for an appointment, you should call to let the person you are scheduled to meet with know.

For social gatherings in the U.S., it is usual to arrive between five and 20 minutes after the time specified in the invitation. Again, if you will be later than that, you should call. Some visitors are surprised that invitations to social events in the U.S. may have the ending time of the event as well as the time of the start of the event. It is common, for example, for an invitation to a reception to state the time as 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Guests are expected to begin to leave around the ending time given.

### **Speeches and Media Coverage**

Many groups and organizations throughout the United States are interested in hearing International Visitor Leadership Program participants discuss their own countries and express their views on current events or

topics. While we cannot always guarantee speaking engagements during your program, you may wish to volunteer. If you volunteer your services as a speaker, you will find that it is a rewarding experience.

If you would be willing to express your views to the local press or on a television or radio "talk show," tell your program officer or local sponsor. Service clubs such as Rotary are particularly interested in welcoming visitors from abroad to meetings, whether or not they are guest speakers.

It may be possible, if you wish, to participate in a round table discussion or brief seminar on a topic of interest to you. Many educational institutions conduct such seminars and are pleased to welcome the participation of visitors from other countries. Schools and universities often welcome classroom speakers.

If you are interested, before you leave home inform the U.S. Embassy official with whom you first discussed your visit. Also inform your program officer and local sponsor. With enough notice, every effort will be made to include such activities in your program.

### **Home Hospitality**

Home hospitality is the way we refer to a wide range of activities that are usually non-professional and designed to give the visitor a sense of what life is like for an ordinary American citizen. Home hospitality may range from an overnight stay at a home or farm, an informal dinner with an American family, a dinner in a restaurant with a few individuals who have an interest in meeting people from abroad, a visit to a museum or a tour of the city accompanied by someone from the city, to a chance to watch an American little league baseball game or join in a picnic or barbecue in a local park. The Americans who participate in home hospitality are volunteering their time because they like to share America with people from other countries and because they like to learn (and sometimes to make it possible for their children to learn) about what life is like for people from other nations around the world.

Home hospitality is often the most memorable part of a program because it will give you an opportunity to meet Americans you would not otherwise have a chance to meet. Compared to the official program, the setting is usually more relaxed and you can experience the more informal part of American life. Many of the Americans who host International Visitors do so because they wish to return the hospitality that they have experienced while traveling abroad. Because these host(s) volunteer their time, it is important not to cancel these appointments as it is with your professional ones.

Although giving gifts to a host is not as much of a tradition in the United States as it is in other countries, many visitors like to bring modest gifts such as a small craft/artisan item that represents their country or a book or pen or key chain. You may also wish to bring along photos of your family and your own city and country to show your hosts in order to share with them your own life and your country's customs. Hosts also welcome letters or postcards after you return to your own country.

### **Geographic Awareness**

Many International Visitors are surprised at how little the Americans they meet know about the world. The United States is an enormous country, consisting of fifty very diverse and independent states. Americans have traditionally received rather insular educations. This is changing and now, with the many new immigrants to America, people in the United States are becoming more aware of other nations and of global issues. But if you find that you meet people who don't know on what continent your country is located or what language is spoken in your nation, please do not be offended but rather take the opportunity to educate the people you meet about your land and its customs and traditions.

### **Cultural Sensitivity**

Some visitors are also surprised by the curiosity that Americans show and the personal questions that they ask. In general, Americans are not particularly formal in their interactions and view personal questions about another person as a way of expressing friendliness and interest. If you don't feel comfortable in answering a question, then you may politely decline to answer.

Americans value directness and candor and may say a straightforward yes or no in a way that is quite different from other cultures which prefer not to be so direct. And you may find that if you are indirect, they will not understand that your "we could look into that possibility" is actually your way of saying no. Candor and frankness in an American should not be taken for rudeness.

### **Hotels**

Every effort is made to obtain good hotel or motel rooms, conveniently located, and at reasonable rates that are within the per diem. Please let your program officer know as soon as possible about any specific wishes you have regarding hotel or motel accommodations. At some American hotels or motels, you may not find all of the personal services that may be available in your own country; for example, shoes should not be left outside your room for overnight polishing. There are seldom concierges in American hotels, but the bell captain, chief porter, or reservation clerk can usually answer any questions you may have.

Most hotels in the United States do not include the price of meals in their rates, and they do not have a service charge. You should therefore tip for individual services rendered. All hotels provide soap and linens. Most hotel rooms have telephones, television sets and private baths. If you wish to be awakened at a specific hour, you should notify the hotel switchboard operator. You should check the hotel desk occasionally for mail and messages.

### **Banks**

Every community has banks. The usual hours of business are from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Some banks in larger cities are open for longer periods, or reopen later in the afternoon or evening. Many banks are closed on Saturday, although some are not. All banks are closed on Sunday and legal holidays. Before cashing a check, banks require the endorsement of one of their account holders. Your local sponsor can direct you to the bank s/he uses and can provide information on which banks exchange foreign currency. Some hotels are also able to exchange foreign currency.

### **Money**

United States money consists of the following coins: 1 cent (penny), 5 cents (nickel), 10 cents (dime), 25 cents (quarter), 50 cents (half-dollar), a silver dollar and a gold dollar. Paper money is issued in denominations of \$1, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, and \$100.

Remember that you should carry your money in the form of traveler's checks, which can be obtained for a small fee at local banks and some travel offices. Traveler's checks are widely accepted, and you will have little or no difficulty in cashing them. Be sure to keep a record of the check numbers and a record of which checks you have cashed, just in case your checks are lost or stolen.

Most banks have Automated Teller Machines (ATMs), which are open 24 hours. These ATMs charge a surcharge for use by customers who do not have an account with that bank but may be used by others and a card from your home bank may work in these machines. You may wish to bring an internationally recognized credit card for personal shopping convenience.

Unlike many countries, services in the United States do not usually include a tax built into the price. Sales tax varies from state to state, but may add anywhere from 0-10% to the cost of goods and services. Hotel taxes can be even higher.

Your Interpreter(s) or English Language Officer(s) also receives a per diem. You will be expected to share with them the cost of taxi rides or joint meals and tips.

### **Tipping**

Baggage porters and hotel bellboys usually expect a minimum of one dollar when carrying luggage to your hotel room. Tipping rates vary from one city to another. In the larger cities and better hotels it is customary to tip one dollar per bag. Tipping in restaurants in the United States averages fifteen percent of the total bill. Normally this is not automatically added to the bill when it is presented to you (except in the

case of very large groups) but should be paid nonetheless. Taxi drivers expect tips of about fifteen percent. It is important to remember that service workers in the U.S. are often not well paid and rely on the money from tips.

### **Electricity**

All electricity in the United States is 110 volts, 60 cycles, and alternating current. If you bring electrical items such as hair dryers, irons, or laptop computers, you may need plug adapters and/or transformers. Hotels usually do not provide adapters.

### **Laundry**

Hotel laundry services are expensive and may be slow. It is advisable to carry as much "wash and wear" or easy maintenance clothing as possible. Clothing to be laundered through the hotel should be sent out immediately upon your arrival. Laundromats, with coin-operated washers and dryers, are available in most cities, for those who wish to do their own laundry. Ask your local sponsor for details.

### **Meals**

Hotel dining rooms and room service meals are often expensive. You will probably want to try other restaurants and eating places. Most large American cities have restaurants with cuisine from almost every part of the world and all have restaurants that range in price from inexpensive to very expensive. Reasonably priced food can be found in cafeterias, where tipping is not necessary and at "fast-food" restaurants.

There may be times when you are invited to have a "Dutch Treat" or "no host" meal. These are terms used by Americans to mean that meals and tips are paid on an individual basis. Therefore, you would be expected to pay for your own meal and tips.

### **Water**

Unless you are advised otherwise, water throughout the United States, as it comes from the tap in hotels, restaurants, office buildings, etc. is always safe to drink.

### **Medical**

Should you require hospitalization, a doctor or a dentist, contact your Interpreter or English Language Officer. If you are traveling alone, contact your local sponsor or the hotel operator. You should have your insurance card with you, when you visit a hospital, doctor's or dentist's office. If you are covered by insurance, this card will be given to you at your opening session.

### **Telephones**

There are public phones "pay phones" located on the street and in offices and shops everywhere in America. These usually require the exact amount in coins (usually 35 cents) to make a call and sometimes an additional amount in coins for distance or length of time.

If you are planning on making phone calls home while you are on the program, you should ask your Interpreter or English Language Officer to assist you to purchase an international phone card. These come in various amounts (\$5, \$10, \$20) and can then be used until the amount purchased runs out. These will be less expensive than calling collect or using hotel telephone operators and systems. Phone cards can be bought in many stores and pharmacies through the U.S.

### **Smoking**

Smoking is very much on the decline in America and is no longer permitted in many public places, office buildings, or shopping malls and stores. Many bars and restaurants do not allow smoking, although some may have a special section for smokers. Smoking is not permitted in any federal building throughout the U.S. or on any airplane. If you smoke, it is polite and customary in the U.S. to request permission from those around you before lighting up -- especially if you are in someone's home.

### **Taxi Cabs, Buses, and Subways**

Most large hotels have a taxi stand or a doorman to summon a cab for you. To get a cab yourself, simply raise your hand to a passing cab or call out "Taxi!" when you see one go by. Most cab drivers cannot provide change for more than a \$5 bill, so it is good to have single \$1 bills and change on hand. In some cities, it is customary for a taxi driver to pick up other passengers if they are traveling in the same general direction. Most taxis have meters, which determine the fare according to time and distance. Taxis in Washington, DC charge according to geographic zones.

Ask the desk clerk at your hotel for information about buses, rapid transit systems, and subways (called the Metro system in some cities). The exact money in coins is required for such transportation in most cities. Your schedule/itinerary will tell you if you can get to your professional meetings using public transportation (i.e. buses, the subway system or rapid rail).

### **Washington, D.C.**

Since most visitors spend some time in Washington, D.C., it is important to understand how Washington, D.C. addresses work. Washington, D.C. is divided into four sectors, Northwest (NW), Northeast (NE), Southwest (SW), and Southeast (SE) with the Capitol building at the center. When you mail a letter or look for an address for an appointment, it is very important to know what sector it is located in. The abbreviation for the sector is included in the street address. Because many of the streets are named with numbers or letters of the alphabet, the same address -- for instance, 301 - Fourth Street, might be located at four different places in Washington, D.C.. If you take a taxi in Washington, D.C., it is very important to tell the driver whether the address is in Northeast (NE), Northwest (NW), Southeast (SE) or Southwest (SW).

### **Problems**

Your U.S. Department of State Program Officer would prefer to hear about any problems or difficulties you are experiencing on the trip as they occur, rather than waiting until the end of the program. Therefore if the meetings you are having are not focusing on your priority areas of interest, or you are having any other difficulty that is compromising the quality of your program, you should discuss these with your Interpreter or English Language Officer or you may call your U.S. Department of State Program Officer directly. While it is difficult to change the itinerary or focus of programs once they have begun, it is not impossible and your program officer will want to work with you to try to resolve problems during the course of your trip.

### **Homeward Bound**

Before you leave the United States to begin your trip home, The U.S. Department of State Program Officer in Washington, D.C. would appreciate a call from you to discuss your trip in general and report on any impressions of your visit you might like to share. You can call toll-free from anywhere in the United States to:

*Regional Programs Division – (800) 827-3824*

*Multi-Regional Programs Division – (800) 650-9822*

*Voluntary Visitors Division – (800) 827-2987*

If your invitation included round-trip international travel, arrangements for your return will be made in Washington, DC. You are required to use United States Air carriers to the maximum extent possible. If you should decide to return home by an indirect route, you will be responsible for any costs beyond the value of your ticket.

If you find you must return home before the expiration of your invitation, you must return to the program agency any part of your per diem allowance covering days you will not spend in the United States. If you wish to remain in the United States beyond the period of your invitation, you will be responsible for all expenses incurred during your extended stay.



## **AFTER YOUR TRIP**

### **Short Term**

In order for the Office of International Visitors to evaluate its programs and decide what works and what doesn't, it asks that all International Visitors meet with their Embassy or Consulate contacts after they return home. This de-briefing session should be your opportunity to speak honestly about what meetings were particularly relevant and useful and which ones were not. It will also be your opportunity to comment on home hospitality, sightseeing, hotels and other logistics, and your Interpreter or English Language Officer. Your contacts will write up your evaluation and send it to the Office of International Visitors, who then shares relevant parts with the National Program Agency and the Local Sponsors. While you may feel obligated to be polite and grateful for the opportunities given to you to travel as an International Visitor, it is most useful for us if you are honest about how your trip functioned. The Office is also particularly interested in knowing if your perceptions of America changed because of your trip experiences.

### **Long Term**

The Office of International Visitors will continue to be interested in how your program affected you and your professional life over the coming years. If you started a program based on something you saw during your International Visitor Leadership Program, if you began a linkage with an individual or institution because of your program, if you write about your experiences or use them to develop a policy or plan, then we would like to know. You can contact us through the Embassy or Consulate in your country, as they too will want to know how your professional life was touched by your International Visitor experience.

Many people come together overseas and throughout the United States  
to make each International Visitor Leadership Program happen.  
All of them hope that your trip will be professionally useful and personally fascinating.  
We hope that it will create for you life-long memories  
of friends and colleagues in the United States.  
We hope that while we may welcome you to America as a stranger --  
when you leave, you will leave as a friend....